

Ancient Ayurvedic food practices we need to bring back



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Why we need to bring back Ayurvedic practices

Ayurveda, India's ancient healing science accords utmost importance to food, and according to it, food is medicine and what you eat and how you eat has everything to do with how you feel.

According to celebrity author and nutritionist Kavita Devgan whose book 'Ultimate Grandmother Hacks' talks about the good dietary practices we need to borrow from the kitchens of our grandmoms, "Almost all Ayurveda practices are now being validated by modern research. My favourite top 5 that I'd like to see everyone practising again are: eating with hands, eating while sitting on the floor, eating freshly cooked food most of the time, eating seasonal, and fasting every now and

then.” Sadly, we have given up most of them. Eating on the dining table or mostly in front of the television, eating with spoon and consuming packaged food may appear as the most logical and convenient practice to most of us, but these small changes in our lifestyles have completely altered the health dynamics in the past few decades.

According to World Health Organisation, globally, 70 per cent of deaths are now attributed to non-communicable diseases which are triggered by shift in the lifestyle and eating habits of people.

Sit down on the floor and eat

It may now seem to be an uncomfortable practice, but this has been the common way of eating food in our country. Still practiced in rural India, sitting on the floor and eating has many advantages. It not just makes the pelvic muscles strong, but is also good for digestion. According to celebrity nutritionist Sandhya Gugnani, “Sitting on floor helps promote mental calmness, soothes nerves and promotes creativity, due to the flow of blood to the brain. It not just makes eating a happy experience but also promotes digestion as when you sit down and eat, there is a maximum concentration of digestive juices in the stomach, which not just enables better digestion but also gradually increases the body's metabolism.”

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Mindful eating

Distracted eating and quickly gobbling food is bad for the digestive system and you cannot get the maximum benefits of what you are eating unless you eat slowly by chewing it properly. Eating quickly fails to send signals to the brain and hence the food does not get digested properly. Also, the saliva in the mouth has digestive enzymes and the first step towards digestion begins in the mouth itself. But when you eat too quickly by gulping it down, the food is not sufficiently exposed to these enzymes, thus impacting digestion.

Eating with hands

Eating with hands is not just more satisfying but is also good for digestion. When food touches your fingers, signals are sent to the

brain and digestive juices are secreted in the gut which enables better digestion of food.

Eating local

Although the rate of obesity has risen in every country of the world since 1975, it has attained gigantic proportions in the Middle East and Pacific nations, where high levels of imported foods have contributed to expanding waistlines, says a WHO data. This makes it evident how important it is to eat local food. Locally grown food is not just good for boosting the economy of the region, but it also promotes soil health as it leads to rotation of crops which is good for the soil and eventually for the quality of the produce. Local food is fresh and hence nutrient dense and also more suitable for the body than those which have been produced

thousands of kilometres away in a different environment and then added with preservatives and loaded in trucks and transported for days, thus losing most of their benefits.

Eat Slowly

Do not gobble your food, eat slowly, and chew your food well. This enables better breakdown of food, and also gives time for the digestive enzymes in the mouth. If your food is not digested well, it may lead to a host of digestive woes, tummy problems and even weight gain.

Eat as per time and season

Seasons and time play a very important role in Ayurveda. To get maximum benefits, it is important to know the right time and season of eating foods which have been classified

into warm and cold as based on their nature. For example, it is advised to drink lemon with warm water as lemon is naturally cold and can increase 'kapha' or mucus in the body. Similarly, all citrus foods should be avoided in the morning and in winters as they are considered cold in nature. Curd, iced drinks and fruits should not be consumed at night. There are foods that do wonders when consumed in the season they grow. Like jaggery or gur has a warming nature and is nourishing in winters and cucumber is a panacea in summers.

Do Not Pair Foods Aimlessly

According to Dr Maneesh S, chief physician, Mekosha Ayurveda Spasuits Resort, Trivandrum, certain food combinations disturb the normal functioning of gastric fire and upset the balance of

doshas and lead to problems like indigestion, acidity and gas formation. "Not every food is compatible. Some such combinations are milk and banana, yogurt and sour fruits, chicken and milk, and honey and ghee."

Do not overstuff

Always leave space for a little food when you end your meal, says Ayurveda. In fact, this mantra is now widely promoted by dieticians and nutritionists. "Food needs to be eaten in moderation and in proper quantity. There should be sufficient gap in between meals, allowing food to be digested," says Sandhya.

Do not drink water while standing

According to Ayurveda, by drinking water while standing, you disrupt the balance of fluids in the body, and if you do it repeatedly it leads to a greater accumulation of fluids in the joints causing arthritis. In fact, drinking water in this position also tends to negatively hamper the kidneys. When you drink water standing up, the water rushes past through the system, putting a pressure on kidneys. While the veracity of this age-old practice is yet to be proved by modern day science, there is no harm in listening to what the elders have been emphasising all through-sitting down and sipping water slowly to get the maximum benefits.